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Art-By-Telephone.

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In an attempt to bring art instruction into small schools financially unable to support such a program, 11 high schools in 4 western states have been receiving simultaneous instruction in art from a central source with the aid of an amplified telephone and coordinated overhead transparencies. Before the onset of classes, the instructor visits each school in order to get acquainted with his students. Students in the art classes are supervised by local, interested teachers, and the art work is mailed back and forth to the art instructor. Each school is linked to every other school and to the instructor by means of a regular conference call placed through the telephone company. Each student is thus able to hear the instructor, view projected transparencies, and respond or question as the need arises. Results of the experiment show that this technique is highly effective in communicating basic art skills to those students in schools whose curricula contain no offering in the art area. (DA)

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WESTERN STATES SMALL SCHOOLS PROJECT

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ART-by-TELEPHONE

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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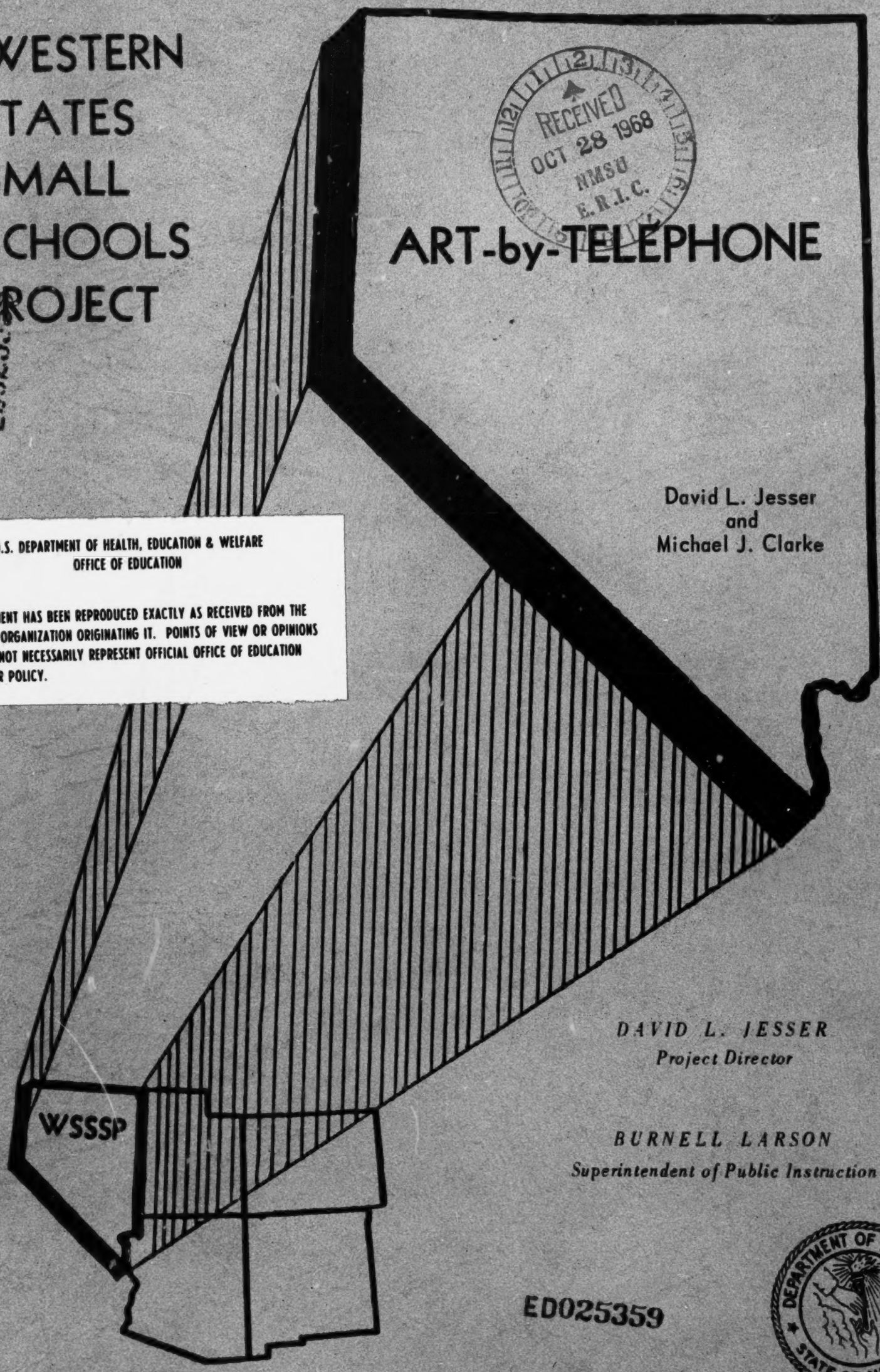

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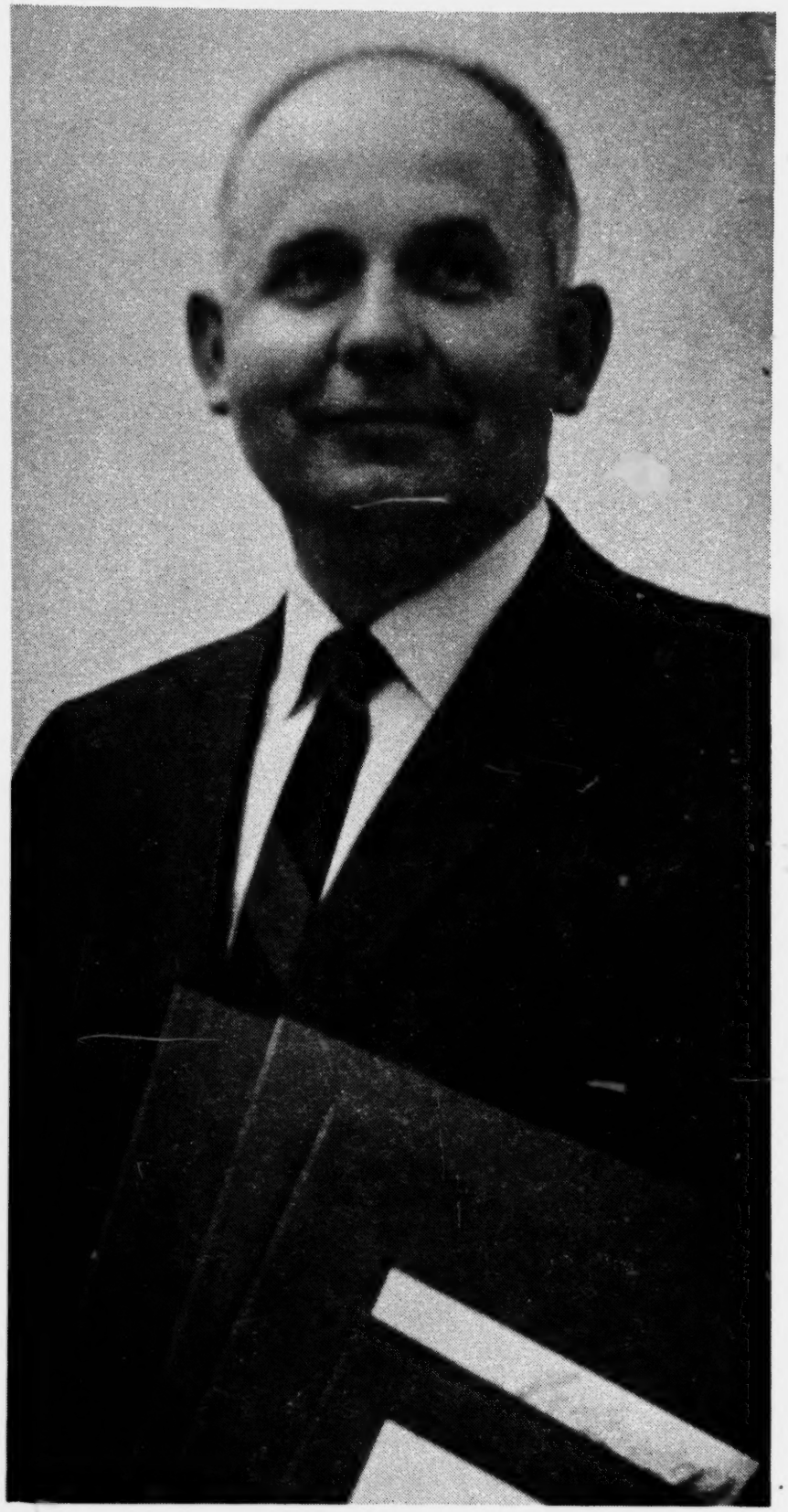


INTRODUCTION

Socrates once said that when there is a man wise enough to teach and one sufficiently eager to learn, there is a school, even though the teacher and pupil may sit together upon a log.

Figuratively speaking, a school exists wherever there is a teacher-learner relationship. In some instances a true one-to-one situation is perhaps desirable; in most situations, however, the opportunity to enjoy a semblance of such a relationship – – – as it is needed by both teacher and pupil – – – is the desired goal.

In the modern day of education, where there are many pupils and few teachers, the goal of achieving effective teacher–learner relationships would appear to be "out–of–sight" to many. Such a goal might well be out of reach if educators themselves were to continue to do things as they had been done in the past. But if educators will utilize the many aspects of communication which have resulted from the tremendous breakthrough in techno–logical developments, the goal itself is truly within reach.

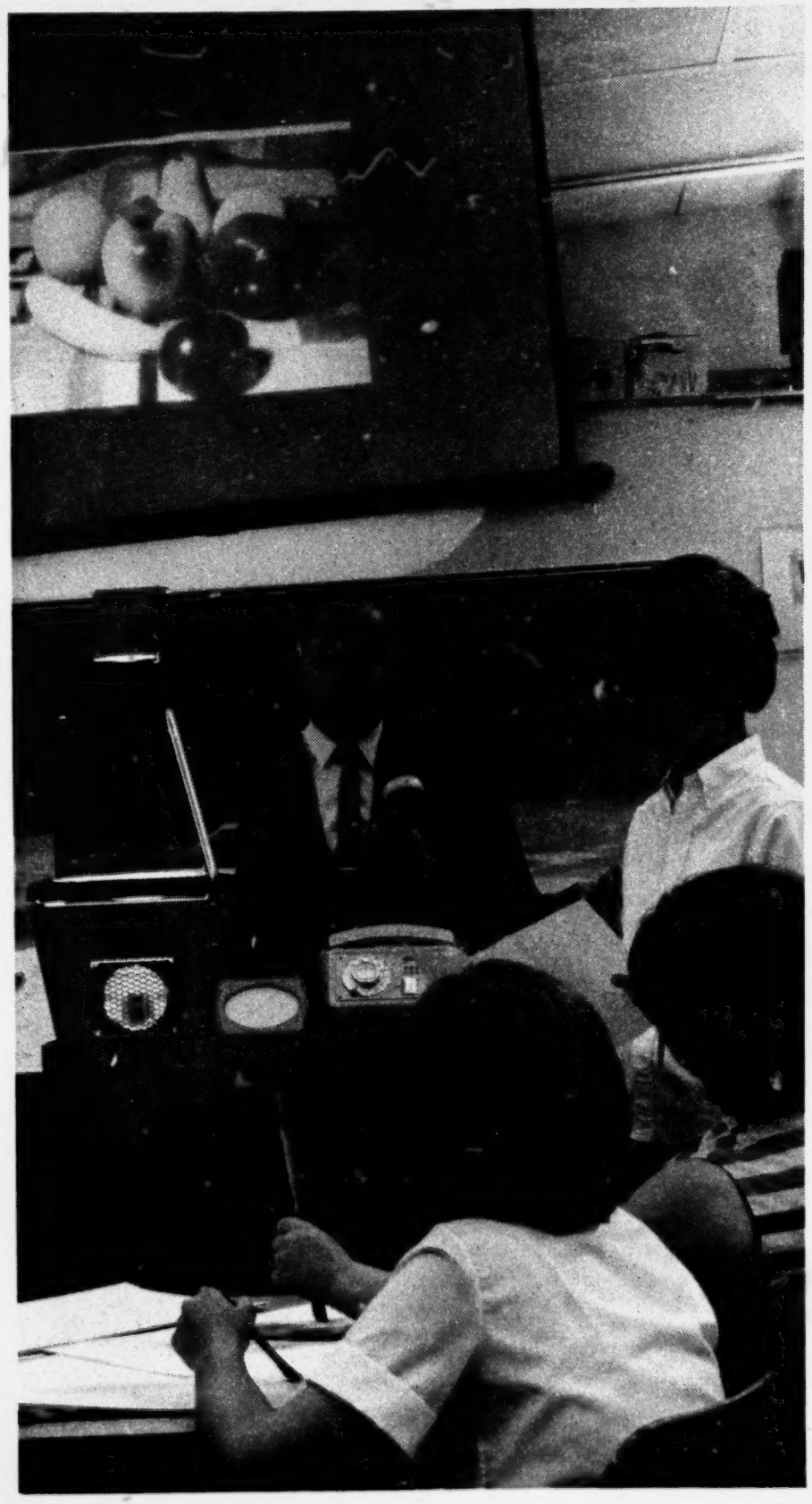
If, however, the goal is to be attained, the teacher – – – the educator – – – must utilize the technology, and must guard against the possibility that the technology will use the teacher. The teacher must always set the standard of teaching, and must also maintain it.

It goes without saying that a good teacher must possess a high degree of knowledge or information relative to that which he is teaching; he must "know his stuff." But in addition to know–ledge, a good teacher must also have insight, imagination, sensi-tivity, and an empathy with his pupils in order that he may more readily know their potentialities and problems. The truly good teacher will both challenge and inspire students to reach far beyond their normal aspirations; to discover capabilities that they did not know they possessed. The real teacher will do these things, and will utilize whatever resources are available.

Such a teacher is Michael J. Clarke, who teaches art in the Virgin Valley High School at Mesquite, Nevada. His own personal attributes, including imagination, insight, and sensi-tivity, led to a practical solution to a problem faced by many

schools. It was his willingness to try the new and his faith that students would respond favorably that led to the development of the project described in the following pages.

The project, as described, began as an idea: from the idea developed what seems to be a truly unique approach to at least one of the problems in our schools today.



Mr. Clarke conducting art class via telephone and overhead projector from Mesquite.

THE CHANGING SCENE

A time-honored adage states that there is "nothing new under the sun." This may have been, at one time, a somewhat valid statement. But in the present day, things are changing at a rate heretofore unimagineable, and there are "new things under the sun." To illustrate there recently has been created in the several of the western states a teaching-learning situation vastly different from that which has been taking place in most of the schools in the nation.

In this unique teaching-learning situation eleven high schools – – – the smallest with a total enrollment of twenty-six, and the largest with an enrollment of 160 – – – have been receiving instruction in art simultaneously from a central source with the aid of the amplified telephone, conference bridge, and coordinated projectuals. (Of the eleven schools which have participated in the "Art-by-Telephone" project, nine had never been able to include formal instruction in art in their curriculum.)

Each of the participating schools, during the actual lesson, is linked to every other school (as well as to the teacher) by means of a regular conference call placed through the telephone company. Each school is equipped with an amplified telephone which enables all students to hear what the instructor is saying, and to respond as the need for such occurs. Each school also has a set of transparencies (identical for every school) which are used either in a 35mm projector or on an overhead projector. These components, when used in concert, enable the instructor to (1) address every pupil in a direct manner, (2) respond to questions raised by pupils, and (3) illustrate his remarks to all pupils at the same time.

The tele-lecture, or lecture-discussion, is presented to the participating schools on a regular basis (in this case, weekly). As has been indicated, materials such as student assignments, transparencies, etc, have been mailed out in advance, pupils in each of the locations may commence work on the assignment immediately following the tele-lecture. In every case the participating schools have recorded the tele-lecture on audio-tapes and thus enabling individual pupils to re-listen to what had been said.

Upon completion of a particular assignment, the pupil(s) mail it to the instructor, who then critiques it. The assignments, together with pertinent comments, are then returned to the several pupils.

ART BY TELEPHONE

While the idea of "Art-by-Telephone" resulted from several attempts to apply modern technological skills to the process of education, it had its primary roots in work which had been done in the area of slow-scan television, which is a technique whereby a series of TV images (still photographs) can be transmitted by low cost. Industrial firms and experimental laboratories were seeking possible applications of this process of education. At the same time, education improvement efforts such as the Western States Small Schools Project were exploring technological developments, and especially those in the communications field, as possible partial solutions to their immediate problems.

In 1964 an attempt to cooperatively explore the possibilities of slow-scan television for educational purposes, a group of teachers met with technicians of the Ball Brothers Laboratory in Boulder, Colorado. The group, which was made up of teachers representing several disciplines, had as its main focus the educational uses of slow-scan television.

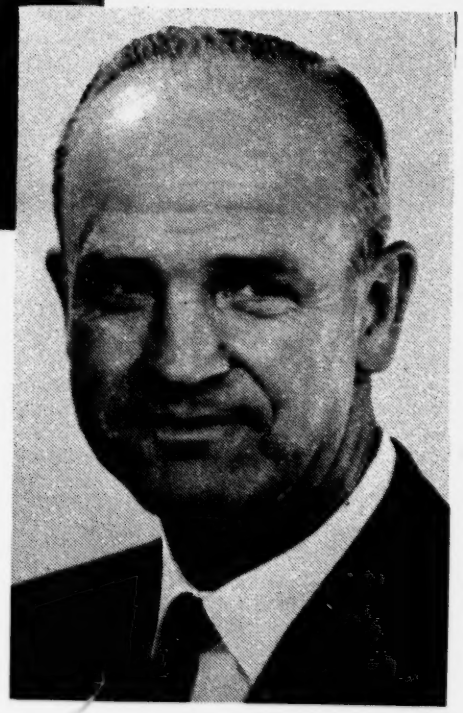
Mr. Michael J. Clarke represented the Nevada WSSSP at the Boulder meeting, and from the work being attempted with slow-scan TV was able to see the educational possibilities of the telephone and telephone line. Mr. Clarke immediately envisioned the "multiple-location classroom" in which pupils in a number of geographically separate locations would be taught by a "master teacher." With the proper use of the telephone and visuals it would be theoretically possible for any number of pupils from any number of places to listen to the same lecture, view the same illustrations, and still have the potential for a high degree of teacher-pupil interaction. Obviously, such a combination (of technology with basic principles of education) would be of considerable benefit to the myriad number of small isolated schools which exist across the land.

While it was (and is) felt that almost any subject might be taught in the manner described, the idea of teaching art in this fashion was especially intriguing. Art is an extremely sensitive subject, and is in reality as broad and deep as life itself. It is interwoven through all facets of our lives – – – and it appears in every aspect of our society. It was felt that if an area of the curriculum as sensitive as art could be taught successfully in this fashion, the capability of this mode of teaching would certainly be demonstrated.

After a series of preliminary discussions involving administrators of several Nevada schools, it was decided that a pilot program, under the auspices of both the local school districts and the Western States Small Schools Project should be conducted. Instrumental in the planning and development of the proposed program were: Lyal Burkholder, Area Director of the Clark County Schools; David L. Jesser, Director of the Western States Small Schools Project for Nevada; Roy Smith, Principal of Wells High School, George Behunin, Principal of Lincoln County High School; David Anderson, Principal of Pahranagat Valley High School; Blaine Allan, Principal of Virgin Valley High School; and Michael J. Clarke, art instructor of the Virgin Valley High School. Technical assistance during the planning and operational phases was given by personnel of the Rio Virgin Telephone Company of Mesquite, Nevada.

David L. Jesser, Nevada WSSSP Director

Lyal Burkholder. Clark County Area Director



Blaine W. Allan, Principal Virgin Valley Schools

Upon completion of the preliminary planning a target date of September, 1965, was set for an art-by-telephone program for the few high schools indicated above.

Many problems arose in putting the idea into actual practice. There were differences in time schedules to be resolved; there were background noises, occasional blurred pictures, irregular sound. But these were mechanical things which could be, and were, quickly resolved.

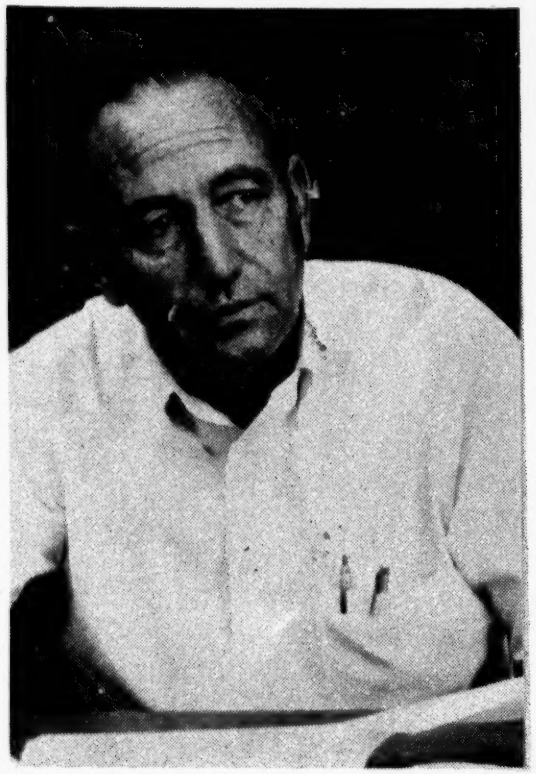
As always, the chief factor of effective teaching is the teacher. Regardless of his skill, he must be more than a voice out of the darkness or in the back of the room. On the other hand, he cannot as effectively address himself to the air as to people with whom he has personal contact.

Because of the problem noted above, Mr. Clarke decided to make personal visits to each school. He was able to meet each student personally, and after a careful study of pupil personnel cards, was able to become well acquainted with them. In fact, he could almost anticipate their problems and questions.

Once this degree of rapport was achieved, the teaching tempo was stepped up; there was verve and exhuberance in carrying out this new experiment and in trying to produce pictures on canvas. During the first semester, practically all the work was done in black and white. However, as the semester neared its close and the teacher and students had become better able to communicate with each other, some students began to work in color with remarkable success.

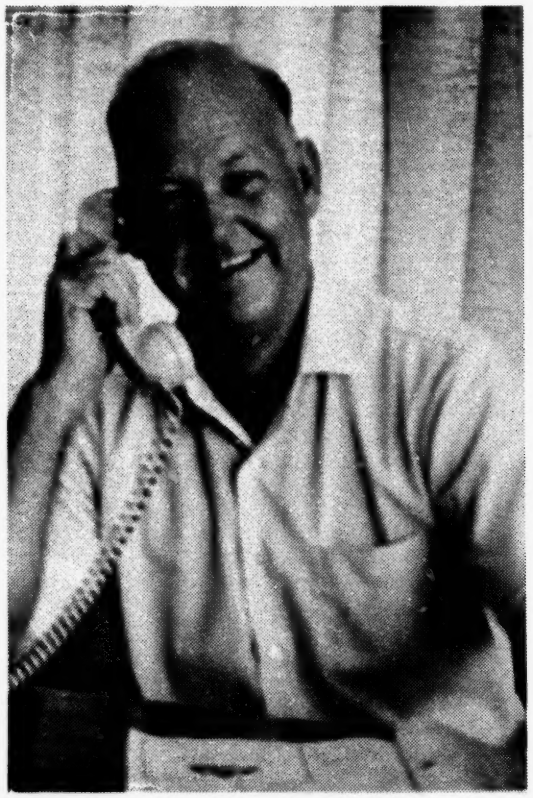
The excitement and glow of creativity has made several want to follow some phase of art as their career; all wanted to continue the class the following semester.

The measure of success in an individual is not only what he himself produces, but what those working with him are capable of creating or producing. The number who, having lighted their candle at his flame, carry it far and in turn light others, is a more accurate indication. If the preceding criterion is applied to the "Art-by-Telephone" and if the results are examined, the program must be deemed highly successful, largely through the enthusiasm and skill of Michael J. Clarke, the instructor.

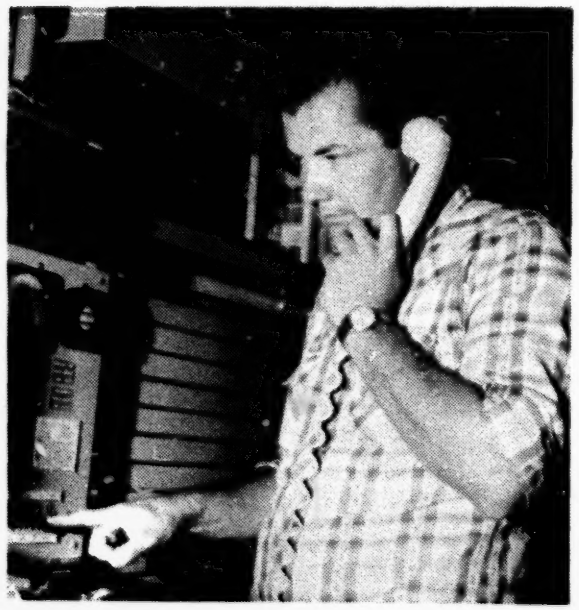


Mike Burns, Executive Director Rio Virgir
Telephone Company

James N. Pulsipher, President
Rio Virgin Telephone Company



Dan Spencer, Manager
Rio Virgin Telephone Company



The basic principles of art are as fixed as those of mathematics: ideas of good drawing – – – of perspective, of mass and line, of balance and design – – – must be carefully demonstrated and taught. By means of a simple outline illustration, to which are added by overlay the details as the picture progresses, the student makes his first attempts. Then he is encouraged to select his own subject and follow a similar pattern.

Student completing assignments in local area.

Alamo students sketching in the field.

In every case, the work is related to the student's surroundings. He is taught that one does not need to go to Paris to see the magic of moonlight on the roofs, or to the Alps to learn how inscrutable is a mountain peak. Beauty is everywhere; the vision is from within.

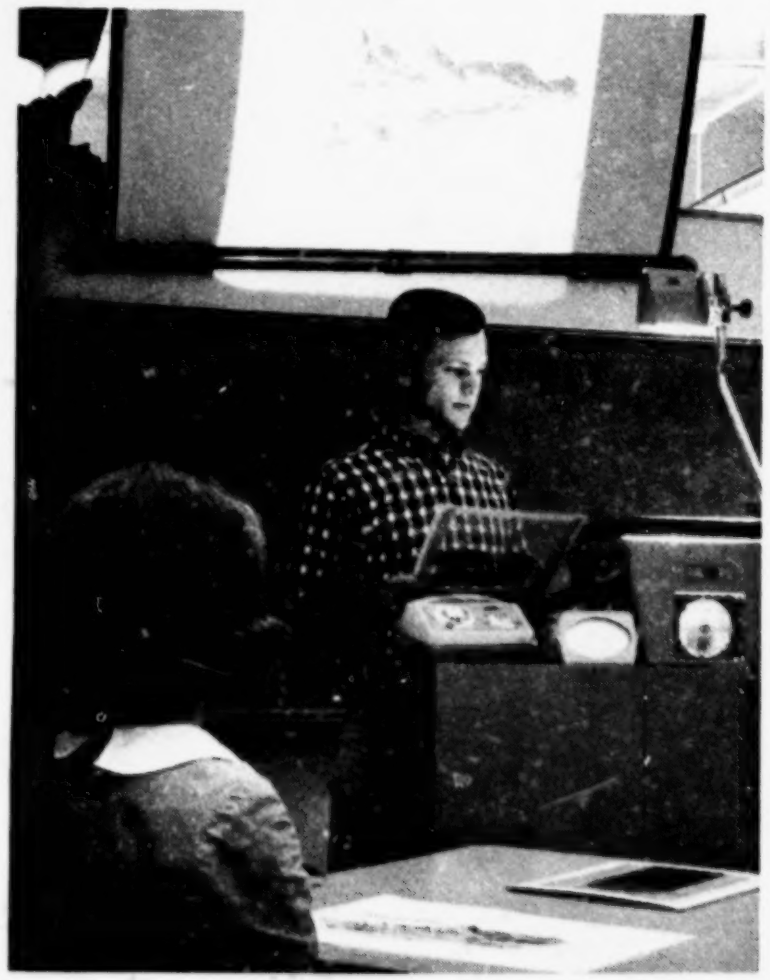
Hence the photographs used at each school are from the community, and the student works with familiar forms and surroundings – a curling milkweed pod, a gila monster designed against a red rock, a cactus flower, a clump of golden autumn cottonwood trees.

Always the work is carried on by laboratory method; each student works on his own project in his own way. In the beginning he uses pencil or charcoal, later he moves to color in chalk or crayon or water color. Finally he tries his hand in oils.

Student communicating with art instructor on the one-to-one basis.

Large group receiving instruction via amplified telephone - overhead projector.

Students conducting their own art class via telephone.



Students reviewing material between art classes, both in small group and individualized study.

Alamo students in class.

Students reviewing their work after receiving it back from art instructor.

At the Virgin Valley High School in Mesquite, Mr. Clarke supervises the laboratory, where work goes on at any and all hours, whenever students have available periods. The weekly lecture is common to all eleven schools.

Always, and in every school, it is the individual student that is important. Everyone finds a new appreciation of art in everyday life, of its functional value in practical fields. Each looks at his world with new eyes, conscious of things to which he had before been blind.

The laboratory method seems better for everyone. The poorer student does just as well when his work is not compared with an identical attempt by one more apt; the average student works happily at what he is doing, as does the one of better than average ability. But to the rare genius, this method literally gives wings. He may work overtime and on week-ends, he may turn out many quickly, some good and some not-so-good, until finally he approaches the elusive atmosphere which he senses. For him, art becomes a passion, a force which makes school a joy and brings up the level of all his other work.

Though conditions vary in the participating schools, the basis results are the same. At Alamo, the class consisted of only three girls, who carry on without supervision, producing (to the surprise of a state visitor) fully as much good work as do the students of the other schools. At Wells, an English teacher, Miss Penelope Percher, directed the work, helping with materials, encouraging, and checking attendance. At Lincoln County High School, this was done by the athletic coach. At Hagerman High School, Idaho, Miss Moore, English; Hansen High School, Idaho, Mrs. Allen, Math; Indian Springs, Nevada, Mrs. Gardner, Home Ec.; Eagle Valley High School, Oregon, Mrs. Sharp, Home Ec.; Pine Valley High School, Oregon, Mrs. Woodley, History; Bryce Valley High School, Utah, Mrs. Adair, Home Ec.; and at Enterprise High School, Utah, Mrs. Steed, Music. In all cases the students receive their weekly packet from Mr. Clarke and mail their work to him.

Miss Penelope Percher examines work of Wells Class

Alamo Class of only three students

Lincoln County Class

Each year the activities culminate in the annual week-long Fine Arts Festival held at the Virgin Valley High School at Mesquite, Nevada. Throughout the festival there are programs of music, dance, drama, and guided lectures through the art exhibit.

Featured artist one year was Antone Priesto, Chairman of the Fine Arts Department of Mills College, Oakland, California. He lectured and gave demonstrations on the ceramic arts. Another year, Paul Lauritz was the featured artist with a lecture demonstration. Mr. Lauritz born in Norway and trained in the great art capitals of the world now resides in Hollywood, Calif.

The art exhibit included paintings from many of the colleges and universities of the southwest. It included the work of professional artists and of semi-professionals in addition to the student art which had been produced during the past season's experiment.

Students from the Virgin Valley High School hanging the art show for the month-long festival.

Pictures from every student were selected, mounted, framed, and displayed among those of his school, and all students came to participate in the program.

At the close of the festival, the entire collection of student art was taken to the participating schools, to remain for a week in each. During this time, a PTA meeting was scheduled where students and teachers saw the work of their students in comparison with that of the other schools. They also heard, via telephone, a lecture discussion on the exhibit, thus sharing in the winter's experiment.

At the end of the school year each student claimed his own work or left it with the school as a nucleus for a permanent collection.

The unique experiment, art by long-distance, has ended its second year. It has been a pioneering success for the Western States Small Schools Project and a demonstration of what can be accomplished when insight is coupled with action. It points the way for many other improvements in the small western schools.

The immediate results, striking as they are, pale before the possibilities. With space erased and numbers naught, what may not be done? Surely, if so complicated a subject as art can be taught effectively through this medium, why not literature, history or any other? The mechanics of sight and sound may well be perfected to clarify the visual image and to improve reception.

Yet the essential element remains – – – THE TEACHER. He is as a dynamo to whose source every student has a direct connection. He generates the spark which sets the machinery in motion, the light which illuminates every lesson, the drive which inspires effort in every listener.

If the figurative log of Socrates has a wise dynamic teacher on one end, students will congregate on the other by hundreds.

Lester Clark, professional artist tours Virgin Valley Art Exhibit with group.